

Ghosts Make Good Detectives

WE shall now turn to some cases which were

more clearly ultramundane in their nature, and I would express my obligation to Mr. Harold Furniss, whose care has restored many details in his collection of criminal records.

The first which I would choose is the murder of Sergeant Davies in the Highlands in the year 1740.

Davies was part of the English garrison left in the north after the suppression of Prince Charlie's rising, and like many of his comrades he alleviated his exile by the excellent sport which the barren country afforded. Upon September 22 in that year he went shooting near Braemar without any attendant. The rancor of the recent war had to some extent died down, and in any case the Sergeant, who was a determined man, feared no opponent.

THE result showed, however, that he was overbold, as he never returned from his expedition. Search parties were sent out, but months passed and there was still no sign of the missing soldier. Five years passed and the mystery was still unsolved. At the end of that time, two Highlanders, Duncan Terig and Alex Bain Macdonald, were arrested because the fowling-piece and some of the property of the lost man were found in their possession. The case rested mainly, however, upon some evidence which was as strange as any ever heard in a court of law.

A farm laborer named Alex Macpherson, aged twenty-six, deposed that one night in the summer of 1750—that is, some nine months after the Sergeant's disappearance, he was lying awake in the barn where all the servants slept, when he saw enter a man dressed in blue who came to his bedside and beckoned him to follow. Outside the door the figure turned and said, "I am Sergeant Davies." The apparition then pointed to a distant moss or swamp, and said: "You will find my bones there. Go and bury them at once, for I can have no peace, nor will I give you any, until my bones are buried; you may get Donald Farquharson to help you." It then vanished.

Early next day Macpherson, according to his own account, went to the place indicated and, obeying the exact instructions received, he came straight upon the body, still wearing the blue regimental coat of Guise's Horse. Macpherson laid it upon the surface, dragging it out from the slime, but did not bury it. A few nights later the vision appeared to him once more as he lay in the barn and reproached him with having failed to carry out the instructions given. Macpherson asked, "Who murdered you?" To this the apparition answered, "Duncan Terig and Alex Macdonald," and vanished once more.

Macpherson next day went to Farquharson and asked him to come and help bury the body, to which the latter agreed. It was accordingly done. No one else was told of the incident save only one friend, John Brewar, who was informed within two days of the burial.

THIS story was certainly open to criticism, as the arrest was in 1754 and the alleged apparition and subsequent burial in 1750, so that one would naturally ask why no information had been given during four years.



True Ghost Stories-IV By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Burial of Sergeant Davies The Miller's Midnight Visitor The Murder of Eugene Dupont

On the other hand, one could imagine that these Celtic Highlanders were somewhat in the position of Irish peasants in an agrarian outrage. They were bound together against a common enemy, and would not act save under pressure. This pressure arrived when the two suspects were actually arrested, the murdered man's gear was found upon them, and direct inquiry was made from the folk in the neighborhood. No ill-will was shown to exist between Macpherson and the accused men, nor was any motive alleged for so extraordinary a concoction.

On the psychic side there are also some objections. One would have conceived that the Sergeant might return, as others seem to have done, in order to identify his murderers, but in this case that was a secondary result, and the main one appears to have been the burial of his own remains. Spirits are not much concerned about their own bodies. In a communication which I saw recently the deceased alluded to his body as "that thing that I used to go about in." Still, earthly prejudices die hard, and if Davies, sprung from a decent stock, yearned for a decent burial, it would surely not be an unnatural thing.

THERE was some corroboration for Macpherson's weird story. There were female quarters in this barn, and a woman worker named Isabel Machardie

deposed that on the second occasion of the apparition she saw "something naked come in at the door and go straight to Macpherson's bed, which frightened her so much that she drew the clothes over her head." She added that when it appeared it came in a bowing posture, but she could not tell what it was. The next morning she asked Macpherson what it was that had troubled them the night before, and he answered that she might be easy, for it would trouble them no more.

There is a discrepancy here between the blue-coated figure of the first vision and the "something naked" of the second, but the fact remained that the woman claimed to have seen something alarming, and to have alluded to it next day. Macpherson, however, could speak nothing but Gaelic, his evidence being interpreted to the Court.

Lockhart, the defending barrister, naturally asked in what tongue the vision spoke, to which Macpherson answered, "In as good Gaelic as ever I heard in Lochaber."

"Pretty good for the ghost of an English sergeant," said Lockhart, and this facile retort made the Court laugh and finally brought about the acquittal of the prisoners, in spite of the more material proofs which could not be explained away. Later, both Lockhart and the Advocate admitted their belief in the guilt of their clients.

AS a matter of fact Davies had fought at Culloden in April, 1746, and met his end in September, 1749, so that he had been nearly three and a half years in the Highlands, mixing in sport with the gillies, and it is difficult to suppose that he could not muster a few simple sentences of their language. But apart from that, although our information shows that knowledge

has to be acquired by personal effort, and not by miracle in the after life, still it is to be so acquired, and if Sergeant Davies saw that it was only in a Gael that he would find those rare psychic gifts which would enable him to appear and to communicate (for every spirit manifestation must have a material basis), then it is not inconceivable that he would master the means, during the ten months or so which elapsed before his reappearance.

Presuming that Macpherson's story is true, it by no means follows that he was the medium, since any one of the sleepers in the barn might have furnished that nameless atmosphere which provides the correct conditions. In all such cases it is to be remembered that this atmosphere is rare and that a spirit comes back not as it would or when it would but as it can. Law, inexorable law, still governs every fresh annex which we add to our knowledge, and only by defining and recognizing the limitations will we gain some dim perception of the conditions of the further life and its relation to the present one.

WE now pass to a case where the spirit interposition seems to have been as clearly proved as anything could be. It was, it is true, some time ago, but full records are still available.

In the year 1632 a yeoman named John Walker lived at the village of Great Lumley, some miles north of Durham. A cousin named Anne Walker kept house for him, and intimacy ensued with the prospect of the usual results.

John Walker greatly feared the scandal, and took diabolical steps to prevent. (Continued on page 88)

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(Concluded from page 26)

it. He sent the young woman over to the town of Chester-le-Street to the care of one Dame Carr. To this matron Anne Walker confessed everything, adding that Walker had used the ominous phrase "that he would take care both of her and of her child."

One night at Dame Carr's door there appeared the sinister visage of Mark Sharp, a Blackburn collier, with a specious message which induced the girl to go with him into the dusk. She was never seen again. Walker, upon being appealed to by Dame Carr, said that it was all right, and that it was better in her condition that she should be among strangers. The old lady had her suspicions, but nothing could be done, and the days passed on.

A fortnight later a miller named James Graham was grinding corn in his mill at night some miles away. It was after midnight when he descended to the floor of the mill after putting a fresh fill of corn in the hopper. His exact experience as preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford was as follows:

The mill door being shut, there stood a woman in the midst of the floor, with her hair hanging down and all bloody with five large wounds on her head. He, being much amazed, began to bless himself, and at last asked her who she was and what she wanted. She answered: "I am the spirit of Anne Walker who lived with John Walker. . . . He promised to send me to where I should be well looked to. . . . and then I should come again and keep his house. I was one night sent away with Mark Sharp, who, upon a certain moor (naming the place), 'slew me with a pick such as men dig coal with and gave me these five wounds, and after three my body fell into a coal-pit head by, and had the pick under a bank and his shoes and stockings being bloody he endeavored to wash them, but seeing the blood would not part he hid them there."

The spirit ended by ordering the miller to reveal the truth on pain of being haunted.

In this case, as in the last, the message was not delivered. The horrified miller was so impressed that he would by no means be alone, but he shirked the delicate task which had been confided to him.

In spite of all his precautions, however, he found himself alone one evening, with the result that the vision instantly reappeared, "very fierce and cruel," to use his description, and insisted that he should do as commanded. More obdurate than the Celtic Macpherson, the miller awaited a third summons which came in so terrific a form in his own garden that his resistance was completely broken down, and so four days before Christmas he went to the nearest magistrate and lodged his deposition.

Search was at once made and the vision was justified in all particulars, which, it must be admitted, has not always been the case where information had seemed to come from beyond. The girl's body, the five wounds in the head, the pick, the bloodstained shoes and stockings were all found, and as the body was in a deep coal-pit there seemed no normal means by which the miller could possibly have known the nature of the wounds unless he had himself inflicted them, which is hardly consistent either with the known facts, with his appearance as informer, or with the girl's admissions to Dame Carr.

JOHN WALKER and Mark Sharp were both arrested and were tried for murder at the Durham Assizes before Judge Davenport. It was shown that the miller was unknown, save by sight, to either prisoner, so that it could not be suggested that he had any personal reason for swearing away their lives by a concocted tale.

The trial was an extraordinary one, for there seems to have been a psychic atmosphere such as has never been recorded in a prosaic British court of law. The foreman of the jury, a Mr. Fairbairn, declared in an affidavit that he saw during the trial the "likeness of a child standing upon Walker's shoulder."

This might be discounted as being the effect upon an emotional nature of the weird evidence to which he listened, but it received a singular corroboration from the Judge, who wrote afterward to a fellow-lawyer, Mr. Sergeant Hutton, of Goldsborough, that he himself was aware of a figure such as Fairbairn described and that during the whole proceedings he was aware of a most uncanny and unusual sensation for which he could by no means account. The verdict was guilty, and the two men were duly executed.

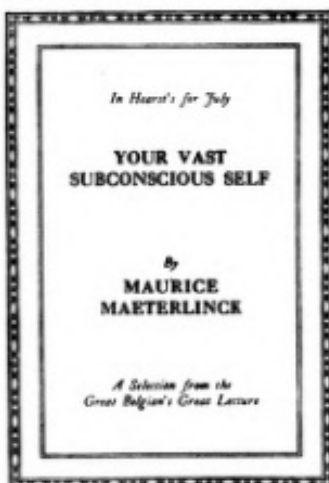
The array of responsible witnesses in this case was remarkable. There was the Judge himself, Mr. Fairbairn with his affidavit, Mr. James Smart, Mr. William Lumley of Great

Lumley, and others. The deposition of the miller, James Graham, is preserved in the Bodleian Library. Altogether it is difficult to see how any case could be better authenticated, and I have no doubt myself that the facts were as stated, and that this single case is enough to convince an unprejudiced mind of the continuance of individuality and of the penetrability of that screen which separates us from the dead.

WHAT comment can psychic science make upon such an episode? In the first place I would judge that the miller was a powerful medium—that is, he exuded that rare atmosphere which enables a spirit to become visible as the meteorite becomes visible when it passes through the atmosphere of earth. It is, I repeat, a rare quality and in this case seems to have been unknown to its possessor, though I should expect to find that the miller had many other psychic experiences which took a less public form. This is the reason why the apparition did not appear before the magistrate himself, but could only approach him by messenger. The spirit may have searched some time before she found her medium, just as Sergeant Davies was ten months before he found the Highlander who had those psychical qualities which enabled him to communicate.

Law and obedience to law run through the whole subject. It is also abundantly evident that the confiding woman, who had been treated with such cold-blooded ingratitude and treachery, carried over to the other world her natural feelings of indignation and her desire for justice. As a curious detail it is also evident that she recovered her consciousness instantly after death, and was enabled to observe the movements of her assassin. With what organs, one may ask? With what organs do we see clear details in a dream? There is something there besides our material eyes.

A most reasonable objection may be urged as to why many innocent people have suffered death and yet have experienced no supernatural help which might have saved them. Any criminologist could name offhand a dozen cases where innocent men have gone to the scaffold.



Why were they not saved? I have written in vain if I have not by now enabled the reader to answer the question himself. If the psychical means are not there, then it is impossible. It may seem unjust, but not more so than the fact that a ship provided with wireless may save its passengers while another is heard of no more. The problem of unmerited suffering is part of that larger problem of the functions of pain and evil, which can only be explained on the supposition that spiritual chastening and elevation come in this fashion, and that this end is so important that the means are trivial in comparison. We must accept this provisional explanation or we are faced with chaos.

CAN these dim faces which we see looming above and around us be turned to the use of man? It would be a degradation to use them for purely material ends, and it would, in my opinion, bring some retribution

with it, but where the interests of justice are concerned I am convinced that they could indeed be used to good effect.

Here is a case in point:

TWO brothers, Eugene and Paul Dupont lived some fifty years ago in the Rue St. Honoré of Paris. Eugene was a banker Paul a man of letters. Eugene disappeared Every conceivable effort was made to trace him, but the police finally gave it up as hopeless. Paul was persevering, however, and in company with a friend Laporte he visited Madame Huerta, a well-known clairvoyant and asked for her assistance.

We have no record as to how far articles of the missing man were given to the medium, as a bloodhound is started on a trail, but whether it was by psychometry or not, Madame Huerta, in the mesmeric state, very quickly got in touch with the past of the two brothers from the dinner where they last met. She described Eugene and followed his movements from the hour that he left the restaurant until he vanished into a house which was identified without difficulty by her audience, though she was unable to give the name of the street. She then described how, inside the house, Eugene Dupont had held a conference with two men whom she described, how he had signed some paper and had received a bundle of banknotes. She then saw him leave the house, saw the two men follow him, saw two other men join in the pursuit, and finally she saw the four assault the banker, murder him, and throw the body into the Seine.

Paul was convinced by the narrative but his comrade Laporte regarded it as a fabrication. They had no sooner reached home, however, than they learned that the missing man had been picked out of the river and was exposed at the morgue. The police, however, were inclined to take the view of suicide, as a good deal of money was in the pockets.

Paul Dupont knew better, however. He hunted out the house; he discovered that the occupants did business with his brother's firm; he found that they held a receipt for two thousand pounds in exchange for notes paid to his brother on the night of the crime, and yet those notes were missing. A letter making an appointment was also discovered.

The two men, a father and son named Dubuchet, were then arrested, and the missing links were at once discovered. The pocketbook which Eugene Dupont had in his possession on the night of the murder was found in Dubuchet's bureau. Other evidence was forthcoming, and finally the two villains were found guilty and were condemned to penal servitude for life.

The medium was not summoned as a witness, on the ground that she was not conscious at the time of her vision, but her revelations undoubtedly brought about the discovery of the crime.

NOW it is clear in this authentic case that the police would have saved themselves much trouble and come to a swifter conclusion had they themselves consulted Madame Huerta in the first instance. And if it is obviously true in this case, why might it not be so in many other cases?

It should be possible at every great police center to have them call upon the best clairvoyant or other medium that can be got, and to use them freely for what they are worth. None are infallible. They have their off days and their failures. No man should ever be convicted upon their evidence. But when it comes to suggesting clues and links, then it might be invaluable.

In the case of Mr. Foxwell, the London stockbroker who fell into the Thames some years ago, it is well known that the mode of his death and the place where his body would be found were described by Von Bourg, the crystal-gazer, and that it was even as he had said. I venture to say that the mere knowledge that the police had at ally against whom every cunning precaution might prove unavailing would in itself be a strong deterrent to premeditated crime. This is so obvious that if it had not been for vague scientific and religious prejudices it would surely have been done long ago.

Its adoption may be one of the first practical and material benefits given by psychic science to humanity.

Do past events leave records that we can live or see long afterwards? Read "Shadows on the Screen"—in Hearst's for July.